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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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R 161938Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 373
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
USCINCSO

S E C R E T SANTIAGO 6976

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY SHLAUDEMAN FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR PINS PINR CI
SUBJECT: TRENDS IN THE SOUTHERN CONE

REF: STATE 171456

1. REFTEL ARRIVED ON THE EVE OF MY DEPARTURE FOR A TRIP THROUGH NORTHERN CHILE. BELOW ARE MY HASTILY DICTATED VIEWS AND THOSE OF MY COLLEAGUES. I HOPE THEY WILL ASSIST IN YOUR CONSIDERATION OF THIS VERY INTERESTING SUBJECT.

2. YOU LEAVE UNSTATED OUR REGIONAL OGRE, THE NECESSARY BACKGROUND THEME FOR A SOUTHERN-CONE TRENDS REPORT; NAMELY, THE SEEMING INEVITABILITY OF THE FAILURE OF MODERN LIBERAL DEMOCRACY AND ITS REPLACEMENT BY MILITARY AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES IN THIS AREA. HERE, MILITARY LEARDERSHIP APPEARS TO BE THE ONLY INSTITUTION ENJOYING ENOUGH PRESTIGE, CONTINUITY, INTERNAL COHESION, AND EXTERNAL CONTROL TO SUCCEED TO POLITICAL POWER WHEN
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CIVILIAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS FAIL TO DEAL ADEQUATELY

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WITH CASCADING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS. FACED WITH CREEPING (AND SOMETIMES GALLOPING) ANARCHY -- IN LARGE PART BECAUSE OF DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC REALITIES -- COUNTRY AFTER COUNTRY HAS OPTED FOR THE SECURITY OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT. THE PATTERN OF MILITARY GOVERNMENT IS FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE SOUTHERN CONE AS A RESPONSE TO AREA PROBLEMS.

3. ALL THE REGIMES IN THE REGION INFRINGE UPON INDIVIDUAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN GREATER OR LESSER DEGREE. THE FACT OF THIS VARIATION FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY SHOULD NOT OBSCURE THE REALITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSE THROUGHOUT THE AREA. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, IT APPEARS THAT THE USG WILL DEVOTE MORE RATHER THAN LESS, OF ITS ENERGY TO INFLUENCE HUMAN RIGHTS POLICIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES. THE COMBINATION OF THE EXISTENCE -- AND PROBABLY THE INEVITABILITY -- OF AUTHORITATIAN REGIMES IN THE SOUTHERN CONE AND LEGITIMATE US CONCERN RE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES GENERATES DIFFICULT POLICY QUESTIONS WHICH MUST BE ADDRESSED. AT WHAT POINT DOES US ACTION TO IMPROVE HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES BECOME INTERVENTION IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS OF ANOTHER COUNTRY? WHERE IS THE LINE BETWEEN HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL RIGHTS? WHEN DOES EXPRESSED US CONCERN FOR HUMAN AND POLITICAL RIGHTS BECOME A CRASS, AND PERHAPS HOPELESS, EFFORT TO REMAKE LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN OUR OWN IMAGE? WHAT IS THE PROPER RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OUR UNILATERAL ACTIONS IN THE HUMAN RIGHTS FIELD AND WHAT THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY DOES MULTILATERALLY? WHAT ABOUT THE INCONSISTENCIES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF APPROACHING HUMAN RIGHTS DIFFERENTLY FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY?

4. WE SEE LITTLE SIGN THAT THE COMMUNISTS ARE A NEAR TERM THREAT TO CHILE OR TO SURROUNDING COUNTRIES. NOR DOE WE SEE A SERIOUS CHALLENGE FROM THE TERRORISTS. IN FACT THERE IS A CERTAIN SYMBIOTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EXISTENCE OF THE COMMUNIST AND TERRORIST THREAT, AND THE APPEARANCE AND PERMANENCE OF MILITARY REGIMES. IN LARGE MEASURE THE MILITARY HERE AND ELSEWHERE CAME TO POWER PRECISELY TO COUNTER THE TERRORIST THREAT; THE

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THREAT MUST REAMIN IN SOME DEGREE AS A PARTIAL JUSTIFICATION FOR THE EXISTENCE OF THE REGIMES. EVEN IN ARGENTINA, AS SEEN FROM HERE, WHILE TERRORISM MAY INFLUENCE EVENTS, IT SEEMS TO HAVE NO MORE CONSTRUCTIVE CAPABILITY ON ITS OWN THAN TERRORIST MOVEMENTS THE WORLD OVER.

5. ON THE ECONOMIC SIDE, CHILE OFFERS SHARP CONTRAST

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TO ITS NEIGHBORS. THE MILITARY REGIME HAS KEPT CAPABLE
TECHNOCRATS IN CHARGE OF THE CHILEAN ECONOMY. WHILE THE
TECHNOCRATS HAVE NOT PRODUCED AN UNQUALIFIED SUCCESS,
CHILE DOES APPEAR TO BE MOVING FORWARD ON MOST FRONTS.
IN CONTRAST, ARGENTINA AND PERU ARE ADOPTING OTHER
POLICIES TO DEAL WITH THE USUAL PROBLEMS
OF INFLATION, UNEMPLOYMENT AND UNDERVELOPMENT, SO
FAR WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS. IN ALL OF THE COUNTRIES OF
THE SOUTHERN CONE, THE USG HAS SOME STAKE IN ECONOMIC
PROGRESS. TOTAL ECONOMIC FAILURE COULD LEAD TO EVEN
TOUGHER TOTALITARIAN REGIMES, OF EITHER THE RIGHT OR
LEFT, HOSTILE TO THE US.

6. A SPECIAL WORD ABOUT THE POTENTIAL FOR LOCAL CON-
FLICT. WHILE WE DISCOUNT AN IMMINENT RESORT TO HOSTILITIES
BY EITHER CHILE OR PERU, THEIR UNEASY RELATIONSHIP
PROVIDES REAL POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT. PERU, AS ITS DILATORY
AND OBSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO THE BOLIVIAN CORRIDOR SITUA-
TION HAS DEMONSTRATED, STILL DOES NOT
ACCEPT THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR OF THE PACIFIC. FROM
THE PERUVIAN POINT OF VIEW, THE JUSTIFICATION IS THERE.
MOREOVER, THE ASYMMETRY BETWEEN CONTINUING US MILITARY
ASSISTANCE TO PERU (AUGMENTED BY SOVIET DELIVERIES) AND
OUR ARMS EMBARGO AGAINST CHILE, COULD EVENTUALLY BECOME
A HIGHLY DESTABILIZING INFLUENCE, BOTH REGIONALLY AND
IN CHILE ITSELF. AT A MINIMUM THE SITUATION WILL FORCE
THE CHILEANS TO CAST ABOUT DESPERATELY FOR WHATEVER
MILITARY SUPPLIES THEY CAN OBTAIN IN OTHER QUARTERS;
IT WILL REDUCE OUR INFLUENCE WITH THE RULING MILITARY
GROUP, AND IT WILL OPEN THE WAY FOR OTHER INFLUENCES
WHICH MAY DIVERGE MARKEDLY FROM OUR OWN. AT A MAXIMUM
OVERWHELMING PERUVIAN MILITARY SUPERIORITY MIGHT
EVENTUALLY BECOME A TEMPTATION TOO GREAT FOR THE PERUVIANS
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TO RESIST. US INTERESTS COULD ONLY SUFFER FROM ANOTHER
WAR OF THE PACIFIC, THE RESULTS OF WHICH FOR LOSERS AND
WINNERS ALIKE WOULD BE UNPREDICTABLE.
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